



March 14, 2022

Environment Committee  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3200  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Phone: 860-240-0440; Email: [envtestimony@cga.ct.gov](mailto:envtestimony@cga.ct.gov)

**Re: SUPPORT (WITH AMENDMENT) HB 5293, AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF CERTAIN ANIMALS IN TRAVELING ANIMAL ACTS<sup>1</sup>**

Dear Co-Chair Cohen, Co-Chair Gresko, Vice Chair Slap, Vice Chair Palm, Ranking Member Miner, Ranking Member Harding, and Honorable Members of the Environment Committee,

On behalf of the Connecticut-based supporters of The Humane Society of the United States, the largest animal protection organization in the country, please accept this public hearing testimony in SUPPORT (with AMENDMENT) of HB 5293, An Act Prohibiting the Use of Wild or Exotic Animals in Traveling Animal Acts. HB 5293 is a commonsense proposal that will promote animal welfare and protect public safety by prohibiting use of certain animals – including elephants, tigers, bears, and camels -- who are commonly used in circuses and other traveling shows, while providing exemptions for legitimate educational activities.

Wild animals in traveling exhibits are trained with pain and the fear of punishment. They're caged and chained in trucks and trailers, forced to endure months of grueling travel, bullied to perform silly tricks, and are denied everything that is natural and important to them. There is ample documentation and irrefutable evidence that the suffering these animals endure is real and systemic throughout the industry, and that existing laws do not sufficiently protect them.

Although animal exhibitors are required to be licensed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which enforces the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA), a USDA license is not evidence of exceptional – or even adequate – animal care.<sup>2</sup> The AWA establishes only very minimal guidelines and fails to incorporate modern animal care practices. As a result, exhibitors can – and all too often do – subject animals to grossly inhumane conditions yet are still considered in compliance with the law. The AWA is also poorly enforced. The Office of Inspector General has criticized the USDA for its weak enforcement of the Act and in the past few years, enforcement of the AWA has been diminished even further.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which\\_year=2022&bill\\_num=5293](https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/cgabillstatus/cgabillstatus.asp?selBillType=Bill&which_year=2022&bill_num=5293)

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General, Controls Over APHIS Licensing of Animal Exhibitors, Audit Report 33601-10-Ch, June 2010; <https://www.usda.gov/oig/webdocs/33601-10-CH.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Karin Brullard and William Wan, "Caged raccoons drooled in 100-degree heat. But federal enforcement has faded," *The Washington Post*, August 22, 2019. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/science/caged-raccoons-drooled->

Yet even with poor enforcement of these weak regulations, most exhibitors with wild animal—including many that appear in Connecticut - have repeated citations for serious violations of the AWA.

In addition, these traveling exhibits also pose a public safety risk by bringing powerful, unpredictable, and stressed wild animals in close proximity to the public. No amount of training can overcome the natural instincts of these dangerous wild animals and, as has been repeatedly demonstrated, trainers cannot protect themselves, let alone the public, when a wild animal rebels. Since 1990, scores of people, including dozens of children, have been injured by bears, big cats, elephants, primates, and other wild animals used in circuses and traveling shows.

The public's distaste<sup>4,5</sup> for wild animal acts has been growing for decades, and a growing number of states and localities have responded by passing legislation similar to HB 5293: Rhode Island, California, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Hawaii, and 174 jurisdictions across the U.S., including Stamford and Bridgeport, have passed restrictions on wild animal acts. In 2017, Ringling Bros. ended 146 years of wild animal acts.

Suggested amendments:

- 1) Line 33, remove "...any animal that is not domesticated...". This language is problematic as exhibitors often claim that wild animals who have been captive-bred or held in captivity for an extended period of time are "domesticated," especially elephants and cetartiodactyla (which includes camels). Removing "any animal that is not domesticated" will provide clarity for law enforcement and align with this bill's intent.
- 2) Line 17, replace "C" with "R". Research facilities, as well as universities or colleges that conduct research using animals, do not hold class C exhibitor licenses, but rather class R licenses. A class C license is for exhibitors, i.e., circuses, traveling tiger, bear and sea lion shows, etc.

We urge you to pass this important legislation. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



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[in-100-degree-heat-but-federal-enforcement-has-faded/2019/08/21/9abf80ec-8793-11e9-a491-25df61c78dc4\\_story.html?noredirect=on](https://www.humanesociety.org/news/cruellest-shows-earth)

<sup>4</sup> In 2016, *Forbes* magazine reported that U.S. circus attendance dropped an estimated 30-50% over the previous 20 years. In 2015, a Gallup poll showed that 69% of Americans are concerned about the use of wild animals in travelling shows.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.humanesociety.org/news/cruellest-shows-earth>